**Connecting Rural Areas with National Highways**

†3334. DR.D.MASTHAN:
SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA:
Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have made any plan for connecting the rural areas within 20 Kilometer range of National Highways, in the country to the same;

(b) if so, the detailed outline of this scheme; and

(c) if no such plan has been made, the reasons therefor and whether any such plan will be formulated in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The Ministry of Surface Transport has plans to expand National Highway gradually with the final objective to ensure that no part of the country is more than 50 kms away form a National Highway.

**Disposal of Ships by SCI**

3335. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Shipping Corporation of India propose to dispose off some ships;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken for development of shipping sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN): (a) and (b) The SCI propose to dispose off 13 ships during the year 2000-01. The Government have fixed the economic life of all categories of vessels. Normally when a ship completes its economic life and its repair expenses become prohibitively high, the same is disposed off. However, in some cases when a ship has not completed its economic life but the repair expenses become high due to poor physical condition of the ship or the ship is not acceptable in the market and thus the operation of ship techno-commercially unviable, the same is disposed off.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) The Government have taken the following steps for development of shipping sector:—

(i) Introduction of automatic approval for acquisition of ships.

(ii) Committee for Slotting of ship repair, which used to decide about the yards where ships were required to be repaired, has been abolished. It has been left to the shipowners to decide the yard for repairs based on his commercial judgement.

(iii) Shipping companies have been permitted to retain sale proceeds of Indian ships abroad for utilization for fresh acquisition.

(iv) Freedom to time charter out Indian ships to foreign companies for employment in international cross trade.

(v) Allowing shipping companies to acquire vessels on charter-cum-demise method (similar to hire purchase system).

(vi) Age norms for acquisition of second hand vessels have been further relaxed.

(vii) Import of large vessels have been placed under open general licence w.e.f. 1.4.1997.

**Fourlaning of Highways in Arunachal Pradesh**

3336. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have sanctioned money to improve the National Highways that connects towns located in the North of the Brahmaputra upto Arunachal Pradesh *via* North Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Jonai; and

(b) whether Government will sanction money to build the highway as fourlane highway upto Arunachal Pradesh *via* Dhemaji and Jonai?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.